

SUMMARIUM

BALANCE, 1990–94

Change of Regime in the Hungarian Educational Policy

The year of 1990 has brought significant changes in the life of Hungarian society. An era has come to an end with the first free elections held in decades – the state socialist system has become a thing of the past. Hungary has adapted herself to countries with democratic multi-party system and so her educational policy also could change radically, or it is more correct to say it had to be changed.

1990 was the year of closing and reopening of the Hungarian educational policy. It put an end to the symptoms of the crisis of the organizational principles of the education, to the acceleration of depreciation of values emerging more and more clearly for nearly ten years or at least from the middle of the 80-ies and opened a way towards the legitimization of new aspirations, values and interests.

The change in the educational system was carried out in a historically short time, 3 or 4 years, establishing radically new elements in the system and the administration of lower, secondary and higher level of education.

First, the ownership structure of the system started to develop democratically. Not only the state owned schools have been taken over by the self-governments but the circle of school maintainers has grown wider with the emergence of church and private schools: from the last two types about 300 institutions have been formed during the last few years.

Second, the scale of school types has become multi-coloured, many new or old-new school types have been introduced (primary schools with 9 and 10 years of education, grammar schools with 5, 6, or 8, and vocational secondary schools with 5 years of education and different types of special training colleges) in just a few years. The integration of the institutions of the vocational training system has increased more and more: a school type which runs classes of vocational secondary training and classes of training of skilled workers simultaneously has become typical but beside these classes of traditional or new type of grammar school have been established in many vocational training institutions.

Third, the portion of those who attend a certain school type has changed significantly (between 1988 and 1993 the rate of those who were admitted from primary schools to traditional vocational training schools of skilled workers fell from 44 percent to 37 while the rate of those who were admitted to schools which give a certificate of final examination grew from 42 to 53 percent) and this tendency is visibly accelerating.

Fourth, on the ground of the disintegrated former system of curriculum regulations and administration of education a new system has started to develop, the professional and safeguarding organizations of pedagogues have got the right of voice in the organization of the system, new forums for achieving identity of interest have been established and also a school book market is taking shape.

With the restored freedom of the press a new publicity has been established for the operation of the educational system. More and more schools release their own pedagogical programmes and decisions are coming to be more transparent.

The institutions of higher education enjoy much more autonomy than they used to and it influences their policy on terms of admission: they increase gradually the number and rate of students.

In the history of Hungarian educational policy these changes may well be called radical. Many people, however, also think rightly that processes described above mean only a promising start yet and the bigger part of the changes, more exactly their realization is still ahead of us and the outcomes can hardly be seen clearly. Even if there is no doubt that the legal difficulties of the development of private and church schools have disappeared, the question of the safe operation of these schools especially the financial side, has not yet been solved in the last. For even if it is true that the structure of the Hungarian school system is undergoing a change, it is not clearly seen yet which direction this process is going: whether it is going towards delaying or advancing selection, towards getting "multi-coloured" or integration, it cannot be stated which school types will prove viable and which will not in the long term. Even if the transformation of vocational training has started it cannot be decided where the way it started leads to: what proportion of responsibility the state and the economical sphere will take in vocational training in the future, how big the role of the school system and the role of education outside the system will be in professional training in the near future. Even if it is true that some essential conditions of establishing a market for school books have already come into being it is uncertain when can the financial-technological-political constraints be cleared away. And we can say the same about the principles of curriculum regulation and direction in the new educational law accepted by the Parliament not very long ago: it is not certain whether they can be realized in practice. Even if it is true that the institutions of higher education admit more students than ever before, there is a question of how and when the structure of college and university training will change to truly be able to adjust to the market conditions.

To estimate the changes and events which took place in our educational system during the period of 1990–94 we, of course, lack the right historical perspective. But we cannot give up the idea of trying to understand these events and to start our scientific elaboration. The studies in *EDUCATIO* 1/1994 would like to make a contribution to this work.

The introductory study of *Tamas KOZMA* uses also the elements of a closing study of a project of his, aiming to establish scientifically the long term plans for the development of the Hungarian educational system. He examines the changes which are developing in the same direction and have already been accomplished in the educational policy of well developed countries of the world during the last few decades and will probably be decisive in the development of Hungarian educational policy too. He describes the result of these concerted tendencies as the globalization of education and gives an outline of the American and European models of it. According to his diagnosis the Hungarian schooling system and higher education have arrived at the third stage of globalization, the eve of perfection.

Péter LUKÁCS writes about the paradigms in the educational policy which were used by the participants at public debates on public education in the last few years. At the free election of 1990 the language and the open or latent values of these debates strongly influenced the competing parties in forming their programmes, then the parties which came into power and the opposition too in their aims in educational policy. He describes four paradigms dominant or competing in different periods of time. In 1984–89 the paradigm of "autonomous schools" which found the basis of reference in joining some element of the

decentralized educational systems of the English speaking world and the theory of Yugoslavian local government was predominant. In 1990–91 the paradigm of “marketing” started to become equally important but was rejected by the experts of government when the traditional Central-European “centralized-conservative” paradigm which used to have unquestionable validity till the beginning of the 80-ies was revived against it. According to the author the paradigm of the “division of power” has been competing with the other three to win the favour of the public since 1992.

Péter FARKAS surveys the changes of the four years in the Hungarian vocational training policy in chronological order analyzing the problems which have emerged during the certain periods in the background of their context. Among the subfields of the educational policy it is vocational training that has been influenced by the economical-social-political changes most deeply for it is the system which is in direct contact with the sphere of economy. In the period under discussion this school type was in the process of disintegration but still has changed over from planned economy to market economy establishing radically new conditions for vocational training. As a consequence of this, certain professions and school types have been upgraded, others have lost their values. Students of vocational training schools of skilled workers and students of vocational secondary schools used to carry out practical training for their future job mainly at companies and not in the school workshops. Today the interest of the companies has been shaken in this matter. Vocational training has to face youth unemployment too, which has taken the place of the earlier full employment. The new “tripartit” system of the administration of vocational training was only partly able to solve these problems.

The study of *János SETÉNYI* begins by examining whether the decision-makers succeeded in drawing up the demands of the educational policy arising from the transformation of higher education and from the change of regime in full then he takes a closer look at the institutional system and patterns of the forming of an up to date higher educational policy in Hungary in the last few years. Then he introduces us to the adjustment of the universities and colleges to the transformed social demands. According to this summary the period of 1990–94 has brought significant partial results in Hungarian higher education but these result seem to be ambiguous in all the three fields mentioned above.

Katalin FORRAY writes about how the conditions depicted in the studies above developed during these years. He examines the network of the pre-school period and that of the lower, secondary and higher level institutions, their regional location, their supply of qualified teachers, the demographical changes and the regional aspects of the latter and the regional differences in the supply of language teachers too. The latter is especially important because some years ago it was obligatory to all schools to teach Russian as a foreign language and as soon as this regulation was abolished, the demand for teachers of western languages started to increase significantly and will not be filled for a long time no matter whether we like it or not.

Miklós BALOGH analyses the Hungarian financing system of education in recent years starting from the relation between local governmental bodies which maintain the schools and their educational institutions and exposes the problems of this relation – all those problems which are already perceptible realizing the legal regulations passed since 1990 (laws concerning local governments, public education, vocational training and civil servants). He starts his survey with an analysis of the types of financial decision models of local governments recognisable in practice, the comparison of the different maintainer-directive strategies and the introduction of their advantages and disadvantages.

Ilona LISKÓ gives an account of the process of transformation in the structure of the educational system relying upon two empirical sociological studies. The last socialist minister before the change of regime called for a return to grammar schools with 8 years of education based upon a lower level school with 4 years of education. This system had operated till 1945. The new government formed after the democratic elections did not work out a conception regarding the direction it wanted to develop the schooling system. So since 1990 many of the uniform grammar schools with 4 years of education have become schools with 6 or 8 years of education without any coordination. The Hungarian school system started on the path of desintegration and turning against international tendencies it is returning to the earlier selection again. In vocational training schools, however, which tried to find their new role in these years also without coordination, processes in the opposite direction have started. Many of the vocational training schools for training skilled workers have started vocational secondary classes and many of the vocational secondary schools have started classes of vocational training for skilled workers or even grammar school classes so these schools are on the way of integration and a specific comprehensive tendency started to develop in their work.

Peter Tibor NAGY writing about the question of regulation of religious classes in schools, which has been provoking debate for a long time and has not been settled yet, introduces us to the changes of the standpoints of the churches, parties, and governing bodies cronologically between 1990–94. At the end of the 40-ies and at the beginning of the 50-ies all the activities of churches were taken under tight state control, the religious classes were at first considered hostile, then they were a little more tolerated. From the 60-ies the situation of the changes gradually became consolidated but the religious classes could not be run freely in the 80-ies, either. After the political change of regime there were fierce debates about the organization of this activity in schools which belong to the local governmental bodies, in order to guarantee the right of ideological freedom both to the religious parents and to those who do not want religious classes. According to public opinion polls the proportion of the religious and not religious citizens practically corresponds to the proportions measured in Western Europe and the number of the participants in religious instruction in schools is relatively high too.

In the *Interview* Column we talk to well-known representatives and leaders of educational policy who played important, or even dominant role over a shorter or longer period, in the control of education in the years after the change of regime. The *Document* Column publishes parts of a study of OECD experts on the Hungarian education. The *Review* Column acquaints us with a comprehensive study of *Adrian Wooldridge (Education: Trying harder)* which had been published in the *Economist*.

(text of Péter Lukács – translated by Zsuzsa Mácsok)

BILANZ, 1990–1994

Die Wende im ungarischen Unterrichtswesen

Das Jahr 1990 brachte im Leben der ungarischen Gesellschaft eine entscheidende Änderung. Eine Epoche ging zu Ende: die staatlich-sozialistische Einrichtung gehört schon der Vergangenheit mit der – nach Jahrzehnten zum ersten Mal – frei abgehaltenen Wahlen. Ungarn passte sich den demokratischen mehrparteiensystem-Ländern an, und damit konnte bzw. mußte sich ihre Unterrichtspolitik bis zum den Wurzeln umstalten.